URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

EIGHTH ST // WEST

The Urban Design Framework Plan provides a framework for the actions and improvements to enhance the appearance, function, and overall vitality of the Eighth Street Corridor. Improvements and recommendations identified in the plan are recommendations affecting both the public and private realm. Some of the improvements are simple, less costly improvements that can be implemented more quickly, while others more costly that will require more detailed study, planning, and funding. Due to the length of the Eighth Street Corridor, the Urban Design Plan and its recommendations are presented over a two-page spread.

The intersections of Union Street and Eighth Street and Garfield and Eighth Street are focal points of the Corridor, and these intersections anchor the west and east ends respectively. ***As primary entries and focal points, these areas should be improved with gateway features****, including signage, landscaping, unique pavement treatment, and more to strengthen the identity of the corridor.*

In addition to the corridor's primary gateways, other intersections provide opportunities to help strengthen the corridor's identity and overall sense of place. ***The City should improve these non-gateway intersections with features that complement the primary gateways,*** *including landscaping and signage, but to a lesser extent.*

Most of the buildings along the corridor can be described as well kept, however few have been updated or modernized. The cumulative effect is a corridor that appears outdated. As an alternative to redevelopment, ***façade enhancements could "upgrade" the appearance of the corridor,*** *providing more attractive buildings with attractive and welcoming entrances and storefronts.*

There are segments of Eighth Street where unsightly power lines cross, or run along the street. The utility lines are highly visible to motorists and pedestrians and detract from the appearance of the Corridor. The presence of overhead utilities also impact parkway landscaping, as mature trees are trimmed to avoid power lines. ***The City should facilitate the incremental removal of utility lines*** *by a) requiring new development along the Corridor to bury overhead utilities on the redevelopment parcel and adjacent frontage; and b) incorporating the removal of segments each year into the City's CIP.*

In addition to power lines there are other ***utilities, mechanical infrastructure, and service areas that can detract from the appearance of the Corridor****. These areas should be adequately screened with landscaping and fencing including rooftop mechanical equipment.*

Crossings over the Boardman River and Boardman Lake provide scenic views to the water. To formalize these views ***the City should install scenic overlooks along the bridges and shorelines*** *to provide opportunities for all to enjoy the water.*

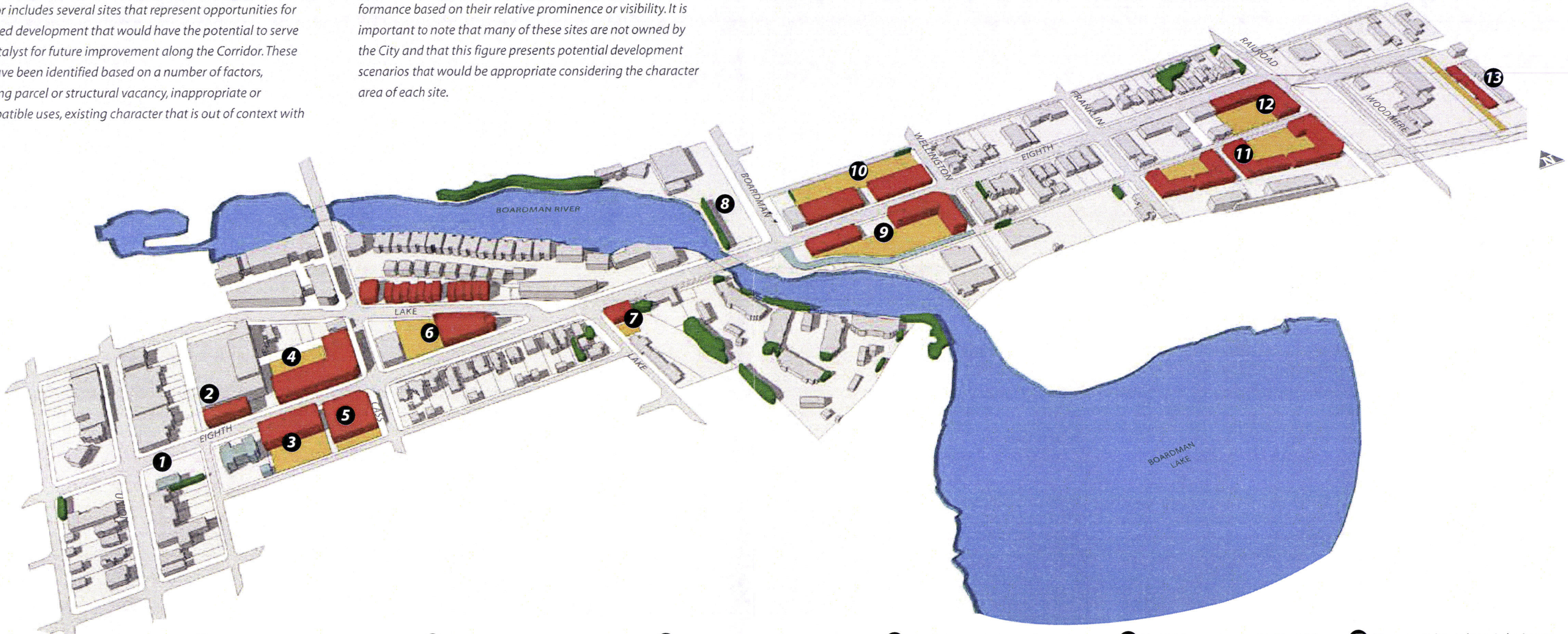
Bb *Chapter 1476 of the City's Code of Ordinances regulates signage throughout the City and limits free-standing signs to 40 square feet, however some non-conforming billboards do exist, constructed prior to stricter regulations. In Michigan, the "Central Hudson Test" has been used to successfully ban billboards within the State, and, although regulation of noncommercial speech is subject to strict scrutiny, commercial speech is subject to a less exacting "intermediate scrutiny" test. To improve the appearance of the Eighth Street Corridor and reinforce the desired pedestrian scale of the street,* ***the City should work toward removing existing billboards through amortization.*** *Amortization would result in the removal of signs over time and help minimize any claims for just compensation that could arise under the Fifth Amendment, Michigan law, and federal legislation.*

In addition to providing formalized scenic overlooks, the City should ***encourage new development to identify and protect viewsheds and vistas*** *onto Boardman Lake, the Boardman River, and other environmental assets by prohibiting overly intensive or massive development that blocks the viewpoint's subject.*

OPPORTUNITY DEVELOPMENT SITES

EIGHTH ST // WEST

Recognizing that any site could redevelop, the Eighth Street Corridor includes several sites that represent opportunities for improved development that would have the potential to serve as a catalyst for future improvement along the Corridor. These sites have been identified based on a number of factors, including parcel or structural vacancy, inappropriate or incompatible uses, existing character that is out of context with surrounding development or natural features, and/or underperformance based on their relative prominence or visibility. It is important to note that many of these sites are not owned by the City and that this figure presents potential development scenarios that would be appropriate considering the character area of each site.



❶ Randy's is a service station located at the intersection of Union and Eighth in the heart of Old Town. It is an auto oriented/centric use in the midst of a pedestrian area. While a local garage is a convenient service, there may be a more appropriate site elsewhere along Eighth Street or within the City. Should the site redevelop, the building should be adaptively reused and uses should be compatible with uses to the south and contribute to pedestrian activity.

❷ A narrow development opportunity exists on the south side of the parking garage, between the parking deck and Eighth Street. Development of this City-owned parcel should explore a shallow multi-story building that could tie to the parking deck with bridges or catwalks. Ideal uses would include ground floor commercial uses, with office or residential above. Additionally, it is important that the design of the building complement the appearance of the attractive parking deck.

❸ On the south side of Eighth Street, between the Playhouse Theatre and Randy's Service Station there are four houses with redevelopment potential. Some have already been converted to business uses while and some remain residential. The proximity to the parking garage allow these sites to maximize their building envelope, accommodating in the parking garage. Although the current uses are appropriate, mixed-use redevelopment would better contribute to the character and synergy of the Corridor. As another option, the addiction recovery facility at 116 E. Eighth Street may represent an opportunity for lodging, such as a bed and breakfast or boutique hotel.

❹ Close to Downtown, Boardman Lake, Boardman River, the new parking garage, and the Hagerty Insurance development, this site represents one of the largest development opportunities in the City. To achieve full potential however, this opportunity will require parcel assembly, which can be difficult. Ideally the development would include all property between Lake Avenue and Eighth Street and strengthen the connection between Old Town and Downtown. The parking garage could accommodate some of the parking needs for this development that should consist of mixed-use buildings, with commercial uses on the ground floor and residential and/or office above.

❺ The Old Town Playhouse Theatre is exploring redevelopment of its site or expansion of their existing building. Similar to properties to the west, redevelopment of the theatre site should capitalize on the parking garage that is within close proximity and maximize full use of the site. Any new building should be located at or near the street, creating a street wall and establishing a pedestrian scale. The Theatre should be engaging and interesting from the street. It should provide opportunities for pedestrian interest, such as the State Theatre that has exhibits and posters in their display windows along "Main Street".

❻ The Thirlby property is a highly visible site within close proximity to Downtown and Old Town. The Thirlby family, and their businesses, have been in the community for many years, and it is important that the Plan recognize that any redevelopment should happen when the owners are ready to leave the site. The triangular site would allow for interesting commercial redevelopment that could contribute to activity, synergy, and the overall character of the area, providing an opportunity for an interesting vista and icon for the Old Town District.

❼ The potential Boardman Lake Avenue would intersect with Eighth Street east of Lake Street and create a development opportunity at its intersection. Development of this site should have primary orientation to Eighth Street with parking in the rear accessed by either Lake Street or the new Boardman Lake Avenue. Given proposed turn restrictions on Lake Avenue, development should mindful of the cut-through potential of this parcel if Boardman Lake Avenue is constructed.